

EDITORIAL

COOPERATIVE STUDIES IN VENEREAL DISEASES

The recent decision of the Medical Society for the Study of venereal diseases to sponsor the formation of a British Cooperative Clinical Group for the investigation of Venereal Disease is a move in the right direction. The case records of the V.D. clinics of Great Britain must contain a wealth of material which up to the present time has not been fully utilized. This may be due to the fact that it has been felt that the amount of data which could be obtained from a single clinic would be insufficient to make the results of any investigation statistically significant. When, however, as in this case, the information from 94 clinics can be pooled and examined, such impediments to the progress of knowledge should be removed.

The group has decided to begin by investigating the results of the treatment of all cases of early syphilis by its members in 1946. Venereologists in Great Britain have been slow to change over to the treatment of syphilis by penicillin alone, and it is hoped that by selecting the year 1946 the Group will be able to collect sufficient data on treated patients who have been adequately followed up to give an authoritative assessment of the value of the com-

bined penicillin-heavy metal therapy. The results of this form of treatment can then be compared with those already published, obtained by the use of penicillin alone.

The functions of this Group will not presumably be confined to the study of syphilis; it is hoped that its members will be able to initiate research into various aspects of all the venereal diseases. Other activities might profitably include therapeutic trials, the laboratory assay of various antibiotics, and, in conjunction with the serologists, the standardization of laboratory reports. Such a programme tackled resolutely and worked at steadily should yield information of immense value to venereologists not only in Great Britain but throughout the world.

It must not be forgotten that scientific investigations cost money. The M.S.S.V.D., which has limited funds, has already been generous to the newly-formed group, but other sources of income will have to be found if the work is to continue. In the past, research on venereal diseases has received little financial support, but we all hope that in the future the necessary funds will be forthcoming.